

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 173

AMEMBASSY PARIS

S E C R E T SAIGON 21269

EXDIS

PARIS FOR AMBASSADOR MARTIN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, MARR, VS, US

SUBJECT: REMARKS BY NGUYEN PHUONG THIEP

REF: CANBERRA 6831

1. AMBASSADOR THIEP'S REMARKS TO AMBASSADOR GREEN ON THE SAIGON SCENE ARE INDEED OUT OF FOCUS. THERE IS OF COURSE NO TRUTH AT ALL TO STORY THAT U.S. IS PRESSING THIEU TO "BROADEN THE BASE" OF HIS GOVERNMENT, MUCH LESS TO THE CHARGE THAT WE ARE PRESSING FOR "COALITION GOVERNMENT". WE ARE CONFIDENT THERE IS NO MISUNDERSTANDING ON THESE POINTS WITHIN THE GVN OR AMONG RESPONSIBLE POLITICIANS.

2. THIEU HAS RISEN STEADILY IN STATURE AMONG SOUTH VIETNAMESE ESPECIALLY SINCE THE UNCERTAIN DAYS OF THE 1972 OFFENSIVE. BOTH AS A NATIONAL LEADER AND AS A POLITICIAN HE HAS SHOWN A SURE TOUCH THAT EVEN MANY OF HIS DETRACTORS NOW ACKNOWLEDGE. PERHAPS THE PLAINEST EVIDENCE OF THE SUCCESS OF HIS LEADERSHIP IS THAT THE COMMUNISTS, WHO LAST JANUARY WERE CONFIDENT OF MAKING DRAMATIC POLITICAL GAINS AFTER THE CEASE-FIRE, FAILED COMPLETELY TO DO SO. IT APPEARS THAT THEY HAVE NOW ABANDONED HOPE, AT LEAST FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, OF A POLITICAL VICTORY BY ANY BUT THE MILITARY ROUTE.

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3. WE THINK THIEP WAS OVER-IMPRESSED WITH THE FLARING UP IN EARLY NOVEMBER OF A FEUD BETWEEN TWO OF THIEU'S CLOSEST ADVISERS, HOANG DUC NHA (COMMISSIONER GENERAL OF INFORMATION) AND NGUYEN VAN NGAN (ADVISED TO THE PRESIDENT ON LIAISON WITH COMMUNITIES AND

ORGANIZATIONS). WHILE THIS DISPUTE LED TO MUCH WILD GOSSIP, IT AT NO POINT THREATENED THE STABILITY OF THE ADMINISTRATION. NEITHER NHA NOR NGAN HAS ANY POWER BASE; THEY BOTH ARE DEPENDENT ON THE SUPPORT THEY RECEIVE FROM THIEU HIMSELF. THE WHOLE EPISODE WAS LITTLE MORE THAN A SQUABBLE WITHIN THE PRESIDENTIAL FAMILY, WHICH THIEU IS NOW COMPOSING WITH HIS USUAL SKILL.

4. WE WOULD CONCLUDE THAT THIEP, WHO HAS NOT RESIDED IN VIET-NAM SINCE 1968, FELL VICTIM IN HIS SHORT HOME LEAVE TO THE SAME SAIGONESE RUMOR MILLS THAT HAVE TAKEN IN SO MANY OTHERS, INCLUDING DISTINGUISHED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FOREIGN PRESS.

5. WE WILL AIRGRAM ADDITIONAL BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ON THIEP.
BENNETT

SECRET

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